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Consumer Advisory Bulletin- February 2003

Iowa's "Lemon Law" -- Know Your Rights!

What do you do if that new car or pickup you purchased or leased turns out to be a "lemon" -- a vehicle with a defect or a problem that just can't be fixed, and that makes the vehicle unreliable or unsafe to drive or significantly reduces its value? Iowa's motor vehicle "Lemon Law" may give you the option of obtaining a refund or replacement vehicle.

Know your rights.

Iowa's Lemon Law covers a motor vehicle that is still within its "Lemon Law Rights Period" -- that is, the first 24,000 miles or 24 months of use since the first buyer took delivery of the vehicle, whichever expires first. At the time you buy or lease a new vehicle, manufacturers are required to notify you in writing of your Lemon Law rights and of the address and phone number where you can file a claim with the manufacturer.

Get paperwork each time you take your new car in for repairs.

The Lemon Law requires manufacturers or dealers to give you a fully-itemized statement of any diagnosis made and all work performed on the vehicle each time you take it to the repair shop. And, if you ask, they also must give you a copy of any manufacturer's service bulletins on that year and model vehicle.

Keep a log of all repairs.

Protect your investment by keeping a complete record of repairs. Keep a simple log listing any problems, and the dates and times of all repairs.

Your vehicle may qualify for replacement or for a refund under the Lemon Law if any of the following apply:

1. It was in for repairs three or more times during the Lemon Law Rights Period for the same problem, and still is not fixed.
2. It was in for repairs just one time for a problem that, if not fixed, could cause substantial bodily injury or death, and the problem is not fixed.
3. It was out of service for 20 or more days in total, for any number of reasons, and still malfunctions. (The 20 days need not be consecutive.)

Contact the Attorney General's office for information.

If you think you have purchased or leased a vehicle which might qualify for a refund or replacement under the Lemon Law, contact the Attorney General's office for a [Lemon Law information packet](#) (also available on the Attorney General's web site.) It includes details about how a vehicle qualifies as a "Lemon," how to exercise your Lemon Law rights, a sample notification letter to send the manufacturer (as you must do under the law), and contact information for motor vehicle manufacturers and their dispute resolution programs. Many Lemon Law disputes are resolved informally or through the dispute resolution process. Note: Although the Attorney General's office can provide helpful information, you will need to contact a private attorney if it's necessary to enforce your Lemon Law rights in court.

For more information, go to: [Iowa Lemon Law](#) or call 515-281-5926 and ask for Lemon Law information.

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